



Planning for Schoodic

Background

Acadia National Park includes 2,366 acres on Schoodic Peninsula, which is the only portion of the park located on the mainland. The National Park Service (NPS) acquired the property at Schoodic in 1929 as a donation from the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations. The Schoodic District offers exceptional views of the rocky coast and surrounding islands in an uncrowded environment, and attracts approximately 250,000 park visitors a year.

In 1935, the U.S. Navy moved its radio station from Mount Desert Island to Schoodic Point so that the NPS could extend the Park Loop Road around Otter Cliffs. The NPS initially transferred 26 acres at Schoodic Point to the U.S. Navy, but, in 1947, Congress authorized the transfer of additional land to allow for the expansion of the base during the Cold War. The U.S. Navy closed the base after 67 years of service and returned 100 acres to the NPS on July 1, 2002, as authorized by Public Laws 80-260 and 107-107.

The former navy base contains 40 major buildings totaling approximately 180,000 sq. ft., including a dormitory, apartment complex, cafeteria, medical clinic, fire station, commissary, gymnasium, day care center, maintenance facility, recreational facilities, warehouse, and related utility systems. The original apartment building and generator house are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Schoodic District is zoned a “natural area” in Acadia’s 1992 General Management Plan. The NPS manages visitor use at Schoodic to retain current use levels and opportunities for low-density recreation. The Schoodic District contains four Maine Critical Areas, which include a section of shoreline for marine invertebrates, Schoodic Island for nesting birds, part of Little Moose Island for rare plants, and two stands of Jack Pine. The NPS is nominating most of the Schoodic District to the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district to recognize and protect its significant cultural landscape.

Planning Alternatives

In response to the transfer of the navy base, the NPS is preparing an amendment to the park’s General Management Plan (GMP) to provide direction for visitor use and resource protection of the Schoodic District over the next 10-15 years. An environmental impact statement will accompany the GMP amendment. To support the plan, the NPS has prepared a cultural landscape inventory, transportation feasibility study, collections management plan, and visitor use study for Schoodic.

Reuse of the former navy base will be consistent with the laws and management policies that govern the use of national parks. In addition to a “No Action” alternative, which is required by the National Environmental Policy Act, the NPS is proposing the following two action alternatives:

National Park Service Management Alternative emphasizes the park’s use of the site for managing the Schoodic District, providing interpretive services to visitors, facilitating park research, offering resident environmental education programs, and housing NPS staff.

Collaborative Management Alternative emphasizes the use of the site as an education and research center by multiple partners, in addition to satisfying the park’s operational needs.

Both alternatives include establishing the Schoodic Education and Research Center (SERC). The purpose of SERC would be to promote and facilitate education and research that is consistent with the mission of the NPS. SERC’s programs and activities cannot degrade the purposes and values for which Acadia National Park was established. SERC would offer classrooms, laboratories, offices, and lodging to educators, researchers, and students of all ages.

Under the National Park Service Management Alternative, SERC would expand and improve the park’s ongoing educational and research activities. Under the Collaborative Management Alternative, SERC would also provide opportunities for collaboration among a variety of partners and complement the growing momentum in biological science and genetics research that is underway in Downeast Maine.

Establishing the Schoodic Education and Research Center under the Collaborative Management Alternative

Nonprofit Organization: The NPS would work with an existing or create an independent nonprofit organization to assist in developing and managing SERC. The nonprofit would serve as an umbrella organization to coordinate the use of the facilities by partners participating in educational and research activities. It would have sufficient autonomy to be creative and expeditious in developing and managing SERC while fully protecting the interests of NPS.

The nonprofit would operate SERC under a cooperative agreement or long-term lease with the NPS, which would include the assignment of real property for its direct use and for reassignment to tenant partners. The nonprofit and NPS would share responsibilities for site renovation and construction to facilitate the efficient reuse of the site. The NPS would provide overall protection and security for the site, and maintain facilities, roads, utility systems, and other infrastructure.

Partnerships: SERC would consist of partnerships among independent organizations and government agencies that would collaborate on research and education relating to human health and the environment. Specifically, research and education at SERC may be in such fields as: anthropology, archeology, astronomy, atmospheric science, biochemistry, biology, computer sciences, ecology, environmental conservation, ethnography, fisheries, genetics, geography, geology, historic preservation, history, life sciences, oceanography, social science, wildlife management, and the visual arts relating to the environs of Acadia.

Partners would provide opportunities for the public to learn about their respective research activities through a range of programs and media, such as publications, web sites, and on-site classes, tours, and demonstrations. They would be responsible for funding their respective programs and operations. Partners would also be expected to support SERC financially, which may include paying fair market value rent and covering the cost of utilities. Partners would not conduct commercial activities, such as

manufacturing and other for-profit activities, at SERC.

The NPS has identified more than a dozen potential partners for SERC, including the University of Maine, College of the Atlantic, Elderhostel, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Maine Lakes Conservancy Institute. The NPS would continue to solicit additional partners, determine the viability of these interests, and identify the most appropriate candidates for inclusion in SERC.

Buildings and Infrastructure: A critical step toward establishing SERC is to renovate buildings and infrastructure for use by partners (including the NPS) and make overall improvements to the landscape of the site. The NPS and partners would improve buildings for laboratory, meeting, classroom, office, and residential use.

The commissary, medical center, dormitory, and original apartment buildings offer the greatest potential for accommodating education and research use at Schoodic Point. The NPS has identified these buildings as the top priorities for renovation and reuse.

The commissary would provide large, flexible meeting space for up to approximately 100 people, with state-of-the-art telecommunications and computer stations. The medical center would provide short and long-term laboratory and office space for researchers. The dormitory would serve as the primary short-term residential facility for as many as 125 people. The original apartment building would have space for visitor orientation, exhibits, and partner offices.

Other buildings that require renovation include the chapel, day care center, and bowling alley. The specific reuse of these buildings is dependent on the needs of partners.

In cooperation with partners, the NPS would make other improvements to enhance the qualities of the site, ensure public safety, provide universal accessibility, improve circulation, and create a more campus-like atmosphere.

Additional Information

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